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466836

THE TIMES Tuesday, April 29, 1986

State delays action on Turkey Creek dredging

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Times Correspondent

CROWN POINT — A Lake County plan to dredge Turkey Creek is on hold until the state resolves pollution questions.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources will study whether creek sediments have been polluted by toxins seeping from a chemical dump site about a half mile north of the creek.

The American Chemical Service property at Colfax Avenue in Griffith and the adjacent Griffith landfill comprise a toxic dump site to be cleaned under Federal Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund Program.

Until pollution questions are answered, the state is delaying action on a permit for Turkey Creek dredging.

Deputy County Surveyor William Henderson discussed the delay Monday at the Lake County Drainage Board Advisory Committee meeting.

The drainage board had applied for state and federal permits to remove sediment from Turkey Creek from Cline Avenue to Lake

George. The drainage board budgeted \$20,000 for the project this year.

The EPA will drill test wells at the toxic clean-up site this summer to determine the extent of off-site contamination.

The DNR will be interested in EPA results, said Victor Wenning, DNR Water Division assistant director. Wenning said the DNR study would be completed "as soon as we can" but had no specific time table.

The Natural Resources Commission, an advisory agency to the DNR, requested the study last Thursday.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is one agency protesting work on Turkey Creek, not only because of potential pollution problems, but also because the excavation project would damage wet lands, said wildlife biologist Jean Cochrane.

Henderson called the state action "unfair." He said the state should have granted the permit request on condition of approval from a new Indiana Environmental Management Board.

The Turkey Creek matter surfaced when Barb Baumann of the Lake

Dalecarlia Property Owners Association raised a question on pollution in general.

Baumann asked the Drainage Board Advisory Committee whether any other polluted drains other than Foss Ditch are being maintained by Lake County. Foss Ditch feeds into Lake Dalecarlia.

Drainage Board Advisory Committee members answered "yes" and "certainly," Henderson said, "there are some others that I'd rather not mention publicly." He said the drainage board is not required to address pollution questions.

"That's volunteering information that we're not required to volunteer," he said.

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